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ABSTRACT

This study examines whether students' constant focus on meeting teacher expectations might cause students to see themselves as producers of products for someone else, rather than as learners. Four researchers asked elementary, middle, high school, and university students to describe their experience of classrooms, listening for patterns that would reveal how the need for teacher approval makes them feel about each other and about their work. The researchers also engaged in systematically trying out methods of teaching and assessing learning in which the teacher's role is primarily that of facilitator and in which students evaluate themselves. Findings suggest that participation in "teacher pleasing" interferes with genuine student intellectual, social, and moral growth. Students operate under pressure to please the teacher rather than construct their own meaning out of the classroom experience. They become competitive with each other as they carefully stay within the safe boundaries of right answers. Weaning students from those concerns seems to be harder in direct proportion to the number of years of socialization in "teacher pleasing" and harder if the paradigm shifts only in one class. Implications for teacher educators are discussed. Appendixes contain guidelines given to university students, and university students' definitions of "good" and "bad" as they relate to the classroom environment. (Contains approximately 90 references.) (JDD)

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ED 374 102

# "TEACHER-PLEASING," TRADITIONAL GRADING,--AND LEARNING?

## A Collaborative Qualitative Study

This study describes the effect on student learning of traditional forms of teacher judgment. Each of four researchers contributed data from elementary, middle and high school, and university classes. Findings suggest that participation in the dominant school game of "teacher pleasing" interferes with genuine student intellectual, social, and moral growth.

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The Theoretical Framework

At the 1992 conference of the New England Educational Research Organization, one high school English teacher, three Teacher Education students, and one Teacher Education faculty member presented a qualitative research paper outlining our intention to investigate aspects of the traditional grading system. A lively discussion followed our personal testimonies from the elementary, high school, and university levels of schooling. The most sobering piece of data in that presentation was the university students' unanimous agreement that their preoccupying focus (and that of their similarly successful peers through almost sixteen years of schooling) had been on the game of figuring out what right answers and what correct behaviors each teacher required of them, in order to get top grades. Rarely if ever had their personal goal been the permanent acquisition of content knowledge, to say nothing of the construction of meaning.

In the two years since the 1992 NEERO conference, the four of us engaged in systematically trying out and examining methods of teaching and assessing learning in which the teacher's role is primarily that of facilitator, such that the focus is completely on the learner, his/her peers, and the materials of study. We also monitor ourselves as we try to teach in such a way that students self-evaluate as the primary method of assessment, with teacher judgment being absent as much as possible.

We have looked at student, parent, and administrative reactions to these innovative methods. In particular, we watch

for the development of an internal locus of control in each of our students, once the external control of on-going grades, representing teacher judgment, has been eliminated. In addition, we have been interviewing students and teachers in order to understand what limits people feel they are bound by, and why, as well as to locate, observe, and support those other teachers who are trying to use alternative teaching methods in spite of perceived limitations. A greater range of issues than we had originally anticipated surrounds our in-depth examination of the socialization of students to what we have called "teacher-pleasing" behaviors.

Part of the original conceptual framework for this study exists from as early as 1913, as reported in the bibliography of Kirschenbaum, Simon, and Napier (1971), whose Wad Ja Get?, a popularization of the issue of how grading distorts learning. Like most of the initiatives of the heady freedom movements in schooling during the mid-to-late '60's and early '70's, the questioning of assumptions about teacher power over students (including teacher judgment as the primary manifestation of that power), has been all but forgotten as the nation, driven to become "competitive," has raced to return to "the basics" in a desperate attempt to raise test scores.

Reviews of recent literature suggest, however, that a counter-balancing movement toward what is now being called "authentic assessment," also known as (though sometimes distinguished from) "direct assessment" or "performance

assessment" (Kirst, 1991), appears to be gaining widespread interest. In some cases (Vermont, Michigan, Kentucky and California in the US, and Alberta, Canada) statewide application of alternative forms of assessment are being developed and mandated as an alternative to standardized tests and to traditional grading and reporting to parents. At the 1993 AERA Convention, a participant could have spent much of his/her time in sessions on classroom-based student-assessment, hearing researchers struggle with issues of validity and reliability as well as issues of teacher authority and labor intensiveness.

"Authentic assessment" is generally understood to be a form of assessment "characterized by contextualized, complex intellectual challenges" (Torney-Puerta, 1990), which "plans for the measures themselves to be learning experiences that can provide feedback on processes, and...demands that measures address central and significant issues" (Steele, 1992). Portfolios become vehicles for on-going multidimensional "collaborative reflection" (Johns & VanLeirsburg, 1991; Valeri-Gold, 1992) between students, students and teachers, and students, teachers and families. This theory of authentic assessment is what the members of our research team have been experimenting with implementing in our classrooms.

As in Kentucky, we found that the choice for authentic assessment usually accompanies choices for developmentally appropriate and constructivist classroom practices, professional teamwork, and parent involvement (Kentucky State Department of

Education, 1991). It offers teachers "the opportunity to redefine the curriculum" while offering students "the opportunity to engage in authentic work and receive feedback that speaks directly to their capabilities" (Lockwood, 1991).

An ERIC search for 1982-1992 produced abstracts of forty five articles called up by the descriptor, "authentic assessment." Although only one article on authentic assessment dated from as far back as 1989, a fact that can be attributed to the lack of pre-existence of that particular phrase to describe what teachers have been struggling to create, the explosion of articles since 1990 is evidence that a significant force may exist for counterbalancing the drive to a national focus on scores and standardization.

Most compelling is the fact that of those forty-five articles, only two (both by the same pair of authors) argue for the continued use of multiple-choice tests. Even these authors (Hambleton & Murphy, 1991) acknowledge that multiple-choice tests can be criticized for "foster(ing) a one-right answer mentality, narrow(ing) the curriculum, focus(ing) on discrete skills, and under-represent(ing) the performance of students from low socio-economic backgrounds." Nine of the abstracts, while essentially supportive, primarily recommend more research, speaking to a range of challenges presented by authentic assessment. The remaining thirty-three articles document its successes and advocate its use.

A parallel strand of literature, primarily in the fields of

counseling and therapy, looks at how the kind of language used by the person in authority can support or undermine the process of self-actualization for the patient (Erickson, 1964; Glasser, 1986; Gordon, 1974; Karpman, 1968; Rogers, 1969, 1983)) or the student (Aspy, 1972; Aspy & Roebuck, 1974, 1977; Atwell, 1987; Bostrom, Vlandis, and Rosenbaum, 1961; Britton, 1970; Elbow, 1986; Goswami & Stillman (ed.), 1987; Rogers, 1951). These works, combined with those that study and espouse feminist pedagogy (Culley & Portugese, 1986), describe the struggle to redefine the "authority" of the teacher in such ways that teachers' knowledge base, experience, maturity and especially perspective do not have to be invalidated as teachers attempt to disinvest themselves of what they recognize as debilitating power over students.

The need for our particular study is grounded in our having found essentially absent from descriptions of much of the literature on authentic assessment any calling into question of the whole issue of whether the constant expectation of having to focus on meeting the expectations of someone with more stature in a hierarchy might cause students to see themselves as performers, or as producers of products for someone else, rather than as learners in the highest sense.

It is this issue that makes our study so complex. On the one hand, while critics in the 1960's and 1970's were widely publicized as daring to ask whose agenda it served to have student achievement monitored, measured, and recorded, that essentially political question rarely seems to exist except in

such small-circulation periodicals as Rethinking Schools, Radical Teacher, Feminist Teacher, and Growing without Schooling. On the other hand, it has been shown that deep pleasure can result from engaging in and completing genuine activities that cause people to stretch beyond themselves in order to construct meaning where meaning had not previously existed for them. The development of the self-discipline (responsibility) for that kind of struggle to grow may be what teachers are really searching to provide for students in their classrooms, if only they trusted themselves to do so.

Methodology

Collaborative structures for data gathering and data analysis began in 1991-92. We asked elementary, middle, high school and university students to describe their experience of classrooms, listening for patterns that would reveal how the need for teacher approval makes them feel about each other and about their work. All of us are using dialogic feedback rather than grades on student writing. Essentially, we continue to find that students coming in with traditional expectations exhibit a range of difficulties adjusting to the responsibility that accompanies the freedom from teacher judgment.

The researcher whose site is her own high school classroom used her 1992-93 year of data gathering as a pilot study for a 1993-94 school year of action research in one of five 10th grade English classes. From the themes and refined processes that emerged from that pilot study, she developed a dissertation,

experimenting with alternative forms of assessment and teacher language in that one class.

Through the fall and spring of 1992-93, the researcher whose site is her Teacher Education classes concentrated on systematic generation and analysis of written responses that relate to the research topic from her pre-service Teacher Education students. She collected data on student learning within a structure that replaces most traditional grading with intensive non-judgmental written feedback and on-going dialogue, student portfolios and self-evaluation. Student sources of data include reader response papers, freewrites, and self-evaluation papers. Salient passages from student writings over several semesters were photocopied or transcribed into an expanding comupter file (see Appendix C). These voices represent a rich body of data on the development of feelings and consciousness about the issues surrounding the real and imagined power of grades, and therefore of grade-givers, over students' lives, from their earliest schooling to their present GPA's and expectation of employability.

The Teacher Education students and their professor engaged in a systematic attempt to locate and interview teachers on an elementary and middle school level who are trying to find concrete ways to assess children's work in ways that contribute to rather than detract from children's learning. We met, watched, and interviewed some of the elementary teachers I happened upon in schools as I observed student teachers throughout the state, and teachers recommended by curriculum coordinators of districts.

The expectation is that if some are out there to be randomly discovered, surely there are many more. Classroom teachers using whole language, process writing, cooperative learning, and other constructivist and integrative learning approaches that are difficult to measure by conventional means are talking about, asking about or actively trying out and even modeling inventive approaches to grading, judgment of student work, determining student accountability, and reporting to parents.

Accounting for researcher bias. The teacher and the professor come to this research from decades in classrooms, and began their collaboration in shared concern over the frightening extent to which students rely on the teacher to affirm their thinking and their products. The teacher has written an article about engaging student responsibility, and the professor has been trying out various forms of alternatives to on-going traditional grades for approximately twelve years of college and university teaching. The student researchers were selected for the clarity and thoughtfulness of their classroom observation reports and the depth of their risk-taking struggle for meaning, as evidenced in all of their writings in the professor's teacher certification courses. They welcomed the release from the pressure of grades, and found their voices in the freedom of reader response papers.

Thus all began with a bias against traditional forms of teacher judgment. However, since the intention of the research has been to observe and record the process by which students and teachers come to choose alternative ways to think about student



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products, and to understand what goes on for them as they struggle to do things better, the design of the study itself extends beyond the bias. The visits to classrooms other than their own, the length of time during which the research is being conducted, and the consultation with each other and with colleagues provided other avenues of perspective beyond their prior professional and personal ways of seeing.

The Research Questions:

This is a study which explores the extent to which expectation of teacher judgment impedes and distorts the process of students' intellectual, social, and moral growth. The questions stem from the researchers' observations and concern that in traditional classrooms, student energy is focused on getting the teacher's approval and avoiding teacher disapproval. Operating under pressure to please the teacher rather than construct their own meaning out of the classroom experience and materials, students learn early to censor their own intellectual and social instincts. They become competitive with each other as they carefully stay within the safe boundaries of right answers. They avoid taking the risk-taking leaps that characterize authentic learning. The purpose of this investigation, therefore, is to understand:

--how early in their schooling students are likely to develop a primary focus on teachers' reactions of approval or disapproval rather than on the rich possibilities for learning;

--which unconscious teacher-behaviors and/or language might reinforce teacher-pleasing in spite of teachers' desire to have students become self-directed, and whether certain teacher-

behaviors and/or language might help students become more self-directed learners;

--whether there is a correlation between teachers' choice of certain progressive teaching methods--for example, process writing and other whole language experiences, integrated and hands-on subject matter, and cooperative learning--and their decision to use alternative forms of assessment;

--whether non-judgmental feedback significantly encourages, supports, and challenges pre-service teachers as they examine their own traditional assumptions by actively engaging with progressive theoretical texts, and whether such students can reconstruct their personal conceptions of the role of a teacher in ways that will sustain them through student teaching and induction.

Several troubling but interesting sub-sets of questions emerged during the first two years of the investigation, occuping researcher attention during the second year:

--to what extent does the level of student anxiety increase rather than decrease when the foundations upon which students' prior schooling had previously been built disappear? Is the struggle to adjust to the paradigm shift part of the learning process for everyone, or might it be necessary for the teacher to intervene to keep students from giving up? If so, what kinds of intervention are effective?

--to what extent is the shift from teacher-pleasing to self-direction more difficult for students accustomed to high achievement than for other students? On the other hand, to what extent does the withdrawal of language expressing approval or disapproval give license to students who have never experienced being trusted with their own learning, or who have been oriented to reward/ punishment in strict traditional families as well as schools?

--are there predictable stages through which students develop as they transfer their locus of control from teachers to themselves?

--what are the dilemmas a teacher faces as she/he must agree or disagree with a student's end of term self-evaluation? to what extent is it possible for a teacher to have and convey clear course expectations and at the same time allow every student to grow freely on his/her own terms?

--would such an investigation as this study describes help teacher educators determine--and give them the obligation to

determine--if students have reached advanced stages of social and moral development, in terms of being basically beyond wondering if they're "all right" in someone else's eyes, such that they are mature enough to focus on helping children through the developmental stages (Haberman, 1992)? How is it possible to convey concern about student maturity to both students and colleagues, without the usual mechanism of a failing grade, which may not be appropriate given the guidelines for choosing a grade?

Summary of data

John Holt identifies the damage our data exposes:

> our constant checking up on children's learning so often prevents and destoys learning, and even in time most of the capacity to learn ....their fear of failure, punishment, and disgrace severely reduces their ability both to perceive and to remember, and drives them away from the material being studied and into strategies for fooling teachers into thinking they know what they really don't know (1983, p. 140).

This expectation of themselves - that they must know, and the anxiety that accompanies it, has been the theme of the majority of the university students' descriptions of themselves as students, from earliest elementary grades to the present, and is comfirmed by the data gathered from elementary and secondary school students as well.

In a high school classroom

The particular focus which the high school teacher/researcher chose for her pilot study was to respond to student work in one of her English classes by using only nonjudgmental language as feedback. This strategy, developed for counseling, has been shown to be effective in helping counseling clients to develop responsibility for their behavior. Quarterly grade reports in that class are derived through on-going student/teacher comparison of student work to course objectives, to

determine to what extent the practice of self-evaluation and self-regulation contributes to the development of student responsibility.

For this part of the study, responsible behavior is defined as behavior involving critically analyzing a situation and taking consequent action which is in the best interest of self and others. Twenty behaviors are listed as evidence of responsibility, ranging from the most basic level: attending class, being on time, bringing class materials, completing assignments; through mid-levels: regularly reworking assignments in relation to teacher feedback or self-critical analysis, and recognizing when help is needed and seeking out appropriate assistance; to the highest level: demonstrating willingness to take risks through engaging in personal creative learning activities.

The teacher-language avoided in her classroom or on student writings is language which indicates the speaker is judging rather than facilitating: deciding that another's work or person is "good" or "bad," assuming a superior position of knowledge or authority as differentiated from assuming a position of consultant, and making decisions for another as differentiated from providing options from which the other is free to choose or not to choose (Gordon, 1974). Because grades represent the ultimate form of teacher judgment--warning, criticizing, stereotyping, interpreting, praising and reassuring--all from the position of teacher power, they are not given on individual pieces of student work. Students periodically self-evaluate and

then conference with the teacher, and occasionally with teacher and family. Students participate in setting the guidelines for behavior, evaluation, and grievance.

Our perspective is that all of those forms of judgment make the student dependent on outside verification of their abilities, thus interfering with the development of personal responsibility. This pilot year has confirmed what many years in classrooms suggested: that students tend to be insecure until a teacher tells them their work is right. The data from the high school classrooms, as well as from the university, suggest that the higher the achiever, the greater reliance on teacher approval of the work, and the greater initial anxiety when that approval/disapproval mechanism is withdrawn.

The practice of keeping students in continual dependence on an outside authority is in sharp opposition to what is known about the learning process. Understanding that learning occurs from a process of constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving information, the teachers we have studied are attempting to encourage student interaction with text and with each other by replacing judgmental language forms with "I-messages" paraphrasing, describing, and clarifying questions (Gordon, 1974, 1989; Rogers, 1969, 1983). All of these alternative forms of language establish the teacher as helper or consultant rather than "rescuer" (Karpman, 1968). In doing so, they are examining the extent to which the distinction made in language forms offer students a specific model from which to

learn how to judge their own work, and, in the case of pre-teachers, to think of responding to their own students' work.

Informal data collected from previous years of teaching indicated that when teachers respond less judgmentally--that is, through active listening as students explain their work, by asking higher order questions rather than just giving directions--adolescents often dismissed as "dumb" or "lazy" by other teachers actually turn on to learning. This year seems solidly to confirm that impression.

The high school data indicates that for many months most students did not recognize learning which was in process, but only the finished product; were having difficulty adjusting to the non-judgmental feedback, which they wanted to translate into grades or "doing great!"; had a high level of anxiety about not knowing where they stood at all times; resented not being reminded about obligations; were feeling like guinea pigs, since apparently other teachers were calling theirs "the experimental class"; wanted to be doing just what everyone else in sophomore English was doing; preferred having grammar, on which the feedback would be what is right and what is wrong, and would provide proof to themselves and others that they were indeed accomplishing something, or "learning."

Most were conflating with the withdrawal of traditional forms of judgment the other aspects of this teacher's preferred methods of teaching English in all of her classes: process writing; grammar through writing; in-depth study of literature,

involving connection to the self; cooperative learning or student-centered large group discussion rather than teacher-centered lecture or "answer-pulling" (Holt, 1967, 1983); questioning for higher order thinking skills, and student responsibility. The only thing different about this class, however, was that the grading was up to the students. One girl told her,

> In other classes you get a grade and forget about it. In here you get a grade and it just starts all over again. You have to think about it all the time.

One boy had a difficult time with ungrading since the beginning of the school year, because he likes "to compete." He also did not like the family conferences, with the extra family involvement, even though his was quite supportive. Another student said he saw doing grades as the teacher's job,[1] not the students', and he did not want to meet at all. With all of this student resistance, trying for the first time to be both teacher and researcher was a difficult task. We realized that the constant self-analytical stance may interfere with a teacher's usual early establishments of genuine un-selfconscious relationships with students. In fact, it is possible that some of the initial and persistent student anxiety may have been partly connected to the researcher's/teacher's own initial discomfort with the changed situation.

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[1] More than one university student reported feeling the same.

University students as teacher/researchers

The original research proposal had defined the role of the two pre-service teachers to be that of observing, videotaping, and interviewing students and teachers in public school classrooms. Although they did some of that, they found themselves in additional situations in which they themselves could directly apply what they had learned and had deeply thought about in the research professor's teacher education classes, in university-based research team meetings, and at professional Teacher Education conferences.[2]

Interviews with teachers, students, and parents at random seem to have produced six main questions or concerns. Teachers ask: If there are no grades, how will I know who in my class is understanding the material and who isn't? They are also asking, how will I motivate my students to do the work if they know they aren't being graded? Parents ask: How will I know where my child stands if they aren't being graded? They also ask, how will I know what they are learning? The students ask: If I don't get grades, how do I know if I'm learning? They also ask, How do I know how I'm doing?

In-depth conversations with these interviewees in most cases allowed the questioner to find his/her own answers, or at least new questions to consider. Teachers realize that they use grades as threats, relying on students' fear of failing to

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[2] New England Educational Research Organization, Portsmouth, NH, April-May 1992 and 1993; American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Chicago, February 1994.

"motivate" them. Parents quickly understand that grades can show a comparison to others but don't prove what is being learned, what effort was involved, or how much personal growth occurred. The students who asked the fifth and sixth questions realized and agreed that ultimately, no matter what the teacher puts down as a grade, they know what they learned and didn't learn at the end of a unit.

Interviews and informal observations revealed that parents' and children's concerns were closely related, suggesting a possiblility that the fears of the children could be an extension of the fears expressed by their parents. Parents are always saying, "Oh, you didn't do well on the test? How did everyone else do?" "Oh, really, the whole class failed? That's o.k., then, it must be the teacher's fault." The children, parents and even the teachers interviewed confirmed the university student/researchers' own experience of having "done well" in classes in which they had "psyched out" what the teacher wanted to hear on tests, but had not learned much, if anything, while, on the other hand, they got less than top grades in classes in which they had learned a great deal. "So what do grades really measure?" became one of their deeper questions.

A pre-practicum. For five weeks during the fall semester of 1992, one of the student researchers worked with, among others, middle school students who were represented to him as having very little fear of failing "grade wise," but were so turned off from school that they were not interested in accom-

plishing any task the teacher asked them to do. Teachers had someone walk them from class to class, not trusting them to get there on their own, and found the only thing that "worked" on them were threats. Teachers said that they had only briefly attempted cooperative learning with these students.

The Teacher Education student was given a room separate from regular classrooms for his learning center, where he created five activities isolating each of the five senses, designed to allow for individual freedom and learning independent of the teacher. The activities had answer sheets, which were then corrected, without grades, to diagnose problem areas for the students. Data on student motivation and achievement suggested that the "worst behaved" students from the lowest track surprised their regular teachers by taking on much greater responsibility than was usually expected of them, and by out-performing the students from the highest track, though students themselves never asked how they were doing in terms of grades, and no comparisons were made beyond the data gathering.

After school, with 6th graders. This time in their own classroom, the young researchers observed traditional and transitional behaviors, as students in a team-taught religious school classroom tried to accommodate to the non-traditional sturctures of this once-a-week classroom. As in the pre-practicum experience above, this is not a "regular" classroom, although it meets regularly, and the two teachers/ researchers conduct it as conscientiously as if it were a regular classroom,

creating lesson plans, a syllabus, carefully designed cooperative learning activities, homework, and student self-evaluations. It was difficult for their students to adjust to the no-right-answer freewriting and on-going dialogic "writebacks" that they assigned. The work expected of these religious school students during the regular school day seemed to be of a very different kind of writing, because most of them, even in this alternative context, safely summarized instead of personally engaging with the texts they were asked to read or discuss.

The children's hesitation to just let go and write seems to come from their having been so well socialized to traditional structures that they felt overwhelmed and insecure with the total shift in expectations for that brief period of time every week. They brought into this non-traditional structure the familiar, if limiting, boundaries within which they had become accustomed to operate. It seemed as if the children did not know how to handle the freedom of choice that their religious school teachers were offering them. They still seemed not to realize that they were not being evaluated, and that there was no right or wrong way to approach a freewrite.

An early hypothesis was that, having been exposed to traditional methods for fewer years, sixth graders would have had an easier time with the more open-ended, non-competitive, non-graded approach than their university counterparts had had in the professor's classes. But that is not what this data showed, at least within the confines of this situation. As of late winter,

1993, students in the religious school class still expected to be punished if they didn't do the work--"or else no one will do anything." Like their university counterparts, the young students reported feeling frustrated and angry with their teachers in regular school if others got better grades than they did without working as many hours.

Watching another practicing elementary school teacher. A different kind of student of about sixth grade age seems to be developing in the classroom of an innovative teacher in rural central Connecticut, and spilling out into the rest of his school and school district. That part of the research team that is based in Connecticut visited him frequently; the professor brings an undergraduate class each semester on a field trip to watch his students at work. All of his math and science is hands-on, collaborative, project and activity centered, problem-solving rather than answer-oriented, and student-centered. His room is a live example for students who cannot otherwise imagine applying the theories of Piaget. When interviewed, he indicated that he hates grades, rarely has any paper and pencil tests, and, in fact, his grade book is nearly empty. In science, students compile a portfolio, and then meet with him individually, giving an in-depth self-evaluation of how their work has measured up to the criteria set. Students who are less "intellectually gifted" have the same chance at an A as those students who are so identified, and these are not guaranteed their A. Meeting the criteria is considered to be minimum effort, and is worth a C.

Students must go above and beyond to receive an A.

He was pleased to report that his students have been very honest about the grade they deserve, and that, once he explains his system to the parents, they tend to like it. Overwhelmingly, students report liking the system. The researchers noted that the students took a great deal of pride in their portfolios. This teacher lets his class decide how they want certain projects to be included in their final grades. The overall sense we has of this classroom, and, increasingly, of other classrooms in the school, as well, is that of children responsible for their own and each other's learning, and excited about what they are engaged in. Their teacher is ~~around, somewhere~~, right there with a probing question when groups or individuals are ready for some next steps in their thinking.

Teacher education classes

Difficulty in self-evaluating. Many of the university students self-evaluate, like the fifth graders described above, through honest, realistic attention to their own portfolios. However, data over several semesters indicates that some well-qualified students are reluctant to claim a top grade for themselves. Another category of students, those whose work met merely minimum requirements for thoughtfulness, seem to have predetermined that, given the choice, an A was the only option, as if A's were being given away for free. Many of those students justified their choice in terms that showed they completely ignored pre-established criteria which clearly state

that coming to class and doing the work is bottom line for passing. This set of students seem to be so socialized to expecting a reward for time spent or number of pages produced that they have never really participated in the paradigm shift that others, joyfully, have. Such findings reinforce the notion that reward-oriented college students may not be significantly different from high school students in that regard (Bond & Falchikon (1989), and may perhaps therefore be, as Haberman argues (1992), not yet developmentally ready to become teachers.

In terms of the theory upon which this investigation is grounded, it seems that these students have been deeply damaged by their years of traditional schooling. That this is so is evident when the professor cannot agree with their high self-assessment. Feedback in the margins of their papers from throughout the semester has pointed out the surface quality of the written work, or the inattention to possible connections between what they read and what they observe in classrooms, but somehow students are so eager for an A, they choose to ignore these warnings.

When, based on the data of their portfolios, the professor indicates more comfort with even a B+ than an A, a few students have become furious. They blame the professor for not giving them what they deserve, for not liking them, for not being fair. They almost always report that someone else who did get an A in the class spent all her time partying while they themselves worked diligently on their assignments. Students such as these

make grading time a very upsetting time for the professor, ~~who~~, feeling that she has presented guidelines as clearly and directly as she can, and struggles intensely over whether to honor their choices regardless of their less than inspired growth over time, and who regularly wonders whether encouraging honest, effort is worth as much as the spark, the "aha!", the "now I get it!" that feels to the professor like an A.

Seeing the final grading have this effect on some students reminds the researchers of the intense investment students have in "doing well," regardless of whatever teachers or professors think is going on in their classes. It is always a sobering time, making us wonder if agonizing over grades at the end perpetuates the grading game. In an attempt to adjust that dynamic, we used our research as a stimulus to figure out how to be even clearer about expectations, without taking away from the students the establishment of their own learning agendas. The aim is for students to grow--or begin to grow--to their own internal locus of control, and understanding their own distorted sense of reality, especially in terms of the importance of grades, is part of that growth. Some students "get there" long before the end of the semester, engaging in metacognition through freewriting:

> It's so obvious now, paying attention in class, how brainwashed my classmates and I are. We want specific directions, strict guidelines, complete instructions and we ask many many questions. It's aggravating to me now, because I realize how I've been conditioned. I never chose to be this way. Because if the choice was mine, I wouldn't be so "tight."

Our fear is that if pre-service teachers do not develop to that

point before they enter classrooms as teachers, their ability to help their own students grow will be seriously compromised (Haberman, 1992).

Understanding that new teachers tend to teach as they were taught and as the culture of schools determine (Fullan, 1982; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981), regardless of the progressive content of their teacher education courses, the professor has been exploring ways to make the experience of her courses one through which students might undergo a more fundamental change, by being required to identify and examine their own previously unconscious assumptions about teaching and learning.

The complex strategy to elicit in-depth reflection that has been found most effective, through observation and at least seven semesters of student report, is that of dialoging in the margins of reader response papers (see Guidelines for Reader Response, Appendix A). That dialoguing is the locus of extended problem-posing conversation with individual students (Freire, 1968; Rogers, 1951;). The non-judgmental teacher-feedback models the "no agree-disagree" constraint by which students are bound in their reader response papers, forcing the professor, like the students, to find language which genuinely responds to a careful, respectful reading of the text.

The constraint against any type of judging is a strict one, within whose boundaries anything is open for exploration. At first most students don't know what to write, if they are not allowed to either summarize or judge. The purpose of that

structure is to help them realize how tied they have been to either mindlessly repeating, or swallowing as fact, whatever they read, or to consider themselves to have done some thinking when they judge as good or bad, right or wrong. Some see the structure as just another constraint, something that this professor wants that they have to accommodate. For many, however, especially over time, this challenge to their reading and responding is their first recognition that the distancing habits of their previous schooling have kept them from full rich exploration of compelling ideas. Many then experience as previously unimagined freedom the need to search for approaches that do not allow them to posture above what they are studying.

As students increasingly feel free to write about--that is, to think seriously about--what they know from their own lived experience, and as they feel genuinely heard without being judged, they begin to take the risk of naming and letting go of the traditional assumptions whose effect, they now see, had been to silence them. At that point, not incidentally, once they let go of inflated, labored language and allow their writing to be a way to discover what they think (Lorde, 1984; Elbow, 1981), the voice of their writing inevitably becomes clear and powerful.

Interference with learning. The constraints on that freedom to write are a direct result of socialization to writing whose purpose is to impress a teacher. Many students confess early in a semester:

> I don't like to write. It takes me too long. I

> am not the type of person who can easily grab a pen and a piece of pad of paper and put my ideas down on paper and have them express exacty how I feel. I search for the right phrase, wording, etc. It is very time-consuming. I do enjoy letter writing, though. Perhaps I am not being judged or evaluated (for a grade or for how and what I think and feel).

A quick probing question on another student's quick freewrite justifying his reluctance to write exposes a common but deeply hidden underlying fear:

> Student: I've always been very reflective about what I put down on paper. I like a lot of time to think things over and let my ideas ferment.
>
> Prof.: So "on paper" feels permanent?
>
> St.: Yeah, I guess so. If it's not going to come out like Pulitzer Prize material (which it never does) then don't write it.
>
> Prof.: I anticipated this fear. It will be important for you as a prospective teacher to recognize <u>how</u> this gets internalized.

Even by mid-semester, even with no grades, however, some students will not have broken through the boundaries that keep them from accepting the writing, lesson planning, small group decision-making and presentations, and all other learning, as a process, valuable for its own sake. Some still operate by trying to give the teacher what she wants rather than risking allowing themselves to follow their own hunches (Holt, 1967). These students remain uncomfortable with uncertainty, and frequently resent not having quick closure or definite right answers. Others achieve reflectiveness about their school-imposed disabilities:

> Unfortunately, I still find myself thinking about grades and papers and projects and how I measure up to everyone else. I think it is very hard to overcome 12 years of product-orientation.

Seeing these habits in themselves, they begin to notice the teacher-pleasing behaviors in the elementary and secondary classrooms they visit. Those who have arrived at that level of consciousness report seeing in wildly waving hands something beyond "enthusiastic students eager to learn," instead now recognizing those behaviors as "students trying their hardest to impress the teacher with their answers."

"Right answers" seem to be the currency of the game of teacher-pleasing. Students report experiencing agony in apprehension that the teacher would ask them to read aloud:

> I can remember in elementary school my teachers would always walk around the room looking over our shoulders. I felt like they were spying on me. I was afraid to put down a wrong answer because they would see it and correct me in front of everyone.

John Holt says, "Teachers want right answers and they want them right away"(1967). Pre-service teachers, like many practicing teachers, identify the "quick" student as the "bright" one, rewarding impulsive surface thinking more consistently than reflectiveness:

> My schooling programmed me into believing that the faster you could find an answer the smarter and better a student you were.

University student behaviors and early reader response papers reveal that reading is a task for finishing as fast as they can, not for contemplating, especially not in terms of their own lives. The struggle to learn is not something they have grown up enjoying:

> I've found that whenever I find myself encountering something ...too difficult to me my mind seems to

> automatically shut off. I will try for a while and if I cannot come to a correct solution soon I will stop.

The reader response guidelines and the on-going dialogue, designed to encourage students to explore their own experiences in terms of a text, were new and awkward for most. But even some early, fumbling papers produced direct, honest descriptions of their own socialization, revealing feelings that are crucial for teachers to consider:

> I associate with the child (in Holt's How Children Learn) who knows the right answer but because he does not feel sure enough of their answer, will remain silent because he fears that a trap has been set for him. I did not want to get hooked into answering a question because what if I got it right and she asked another even harder comprehension question? I just stayed quiet.

Some students, finding certain readings beyond their own schema, did not think of taking their confusion as an opportunity to explore how different their own schooling was from what was being described. Quite late in the fall semester of 1992, for example, a number of students in one undergraduate class had great difficulty understanding Sylvia Ashton-Warner's Teacher, because, as it turned out, instead of trying to imagine what she was describing, they were reading absolutely literally, without hearing any shift in tone of voice; not going back over passages that seemed strange to them; and requiring of themselves that they "know" names and places! They translated their anxiety into disliking the book. As one explained in a freewrite, and then elaborated in a further "writeback":

> I get all jumpy and aggravated when I don't understand.

> Prof.: I want you to say lots more about this, if you will.
>
> St: I don't like feeling like the one who doesn't understand. I guess I'm trying to build up my patience. I blame the other person when I don't "get" (understand) something. If others understand, I should too.

What helped this student feel less "jumpy" was our open in-class discussion of the surprisingly widely shared misunderstanding of Ashton-Warner's perspective. The impromptu discussion revealed that many had allowed themselves to get stuck in what they could not recognize as unimportant details. Several, preoccupied with their own failure to know, had given up in frustation. They said that they were used to being told what was important, and then being drilled and tested on those small things. Most saw, through dialogue, that their habitual focus, not any personal inadequacy, caused them to miss the meaning of the whole--which they were also accustomed to being told, and memorizing, even in university classes.

Internalized pressure. Quizzes and tests seem to be an especially serious and universal source of anxiety and even anger for students. Even those few graduate as well as undergraduate students who reported not being in panic over a quiz (on the names of everyone in the class, announced in the first class sesson for the second), indicated that they were angry and thought it wasn't fair, or that they had controlled their usual anxiety. Some, good at memorizing, had studied and were confident; others were doing deep breathing or other exercises to calm themselves down. In the freewrite before the "performance,"

many reported feeling physically sick:

> Anxiety level is high/ pit in stomach / spreading through my arms/ not sure of al the names/ block--mental block/ nerves--nervous/ names are all melding together,a smear; I should know them/ with this freewrite I have forgotten most of them/ think/ concentrate/ ouch!!

The very word "quiz" triggered that level of stress in a class in which there were to be no grades! Athough some students reported still feeling anxiety through the semester about not knowing "where they stood, the release from the pressure of having to think about being judged was the overwhelming feeling reported by most university students.

Focusing on getting right answers in individual tests of performance seems to produce a high level of guilt for anything less than perfection among students of whom it was expected by parents or teachers that they would excel:

> One may argue that being labeled "smart" is a good thing but as anyone who was ever labeled the class brain will tell you, this can lead to tremendous pressure. When I was 8 years old I skipped third grade and went into fourth. From then on I was expected to be a genius at everything I did. I still remember the day I got an 88 on a math test. The principal pulled me into her office and started yelling at me for being lazy. She assumed I understood the material but just didn't care to apply it. NOT TRUE.

> Although I was guilty of being "lazy" as an adolescent, I have spent the past few years of my life killing myself to get A's. When I don't get an A I tend to kick myself thinking, "I was careless, I knew that." A little neurotic, but maybe if there wasn't such an emphasis on my "abilities" as a child I wouldn't have such a compulsive NEED TO DO WELL FOR THE SAKE OF GRADES.

The pressure to stay at the top seems to produce a completely distorted understanding of the range of possible grades: for

students who expect so much of themselves, anything less than an A feels like an F. That strange but apparently widespread feeling accounts in part for the anger students feel when B or B+ turns out to be what the professor considers the more appropriate grade instead of the A they wanted. What kind of teachers will such people, expecting perfection of themselves, turn out to be?

All of us noticed that students who experienced low levels of success in certain subject matter--frequently math, science, and social studies--might avoid teaching those subjects once they are teaching. Random observations and reports suggest that most practicing teachers, especially women, do avoid teaching those subjects. This might be why:

> I have always had a hard time in math. From the first grade until high school, I was always in the low level class. I did not have a disability, nor was I put in a special class, but feelings of inferiority were always present. I knew I was behind. I knew I needed to get good grades. I felt that I just had to pass, but I confused myself even more. I started to become closed minded and started having an attitude toward understanding math.

Further feelings interfere with learning. Guilt over failure to meet what seem to have been earlier teachers' absolute standards of neatness, correctness, and promptness follows university students into teacher education classes, sometimes paralyzing even their freewriting until they completely trust that there will be no grades, and sometimes even then. One student, whose stunningly thoughtful two-and-a-half-page reader response paper came in with three minor editing corrections early in the semester, felt compelled to attach this kind of note:

> St.: I apologize about the lateness and **you will never see a messy paper like this again.** I had problems with my word processor.
>
> Prof.: What are you talking about? I love it that you proofread! Look at where your terror of teacher judgment and expectation of perfection comes from, J! No wonder there's so much fear of teachers! This paper looks fine to me, and what's more important, it says something real!

Another brought in a doctor's note to explain her having missed a class. Reassured that the professor trusted her and did not need to see it, she attached it anyway to her next paper, but had learned something important from the interaction:

> I know you said that I did not have to turn this in, but I still felt more comfortable doing so.
>
> I just have to break the old patterns about the student/teacher relationship from the past.
>
> Thank you for your trust.

In the margin next to her word "trust," the professor responded:

> It's the condition that makes teaching/learning possible. I feel sad that your experience has been not to expect it!

No risk-taking. Right behaviors seem to have been the social side of carefully bounded academic right answers. The readings, response papers, and dialogues in the Teacher Education classes urge students to separate themselves from the traditional conditions they had taken for granted, and which, without examination from the perspective of these theories, they might reproduce in their own teaching:

> I always knew that I didn't like the stuffy environment that I was taught in but I just assumed it was normal like every other school. Everything had to be just so: straight desks, staight lines. I know this

> is why I think the way I do about teachers' expectations. I think this kind of teaching made me less independent in some cases. My teachers always told me what to do and exactly how they wanted it done so that's what I did.

Definitions of certain frequently-used terms reveal levels of teacher-pleasing that could cause miscommunication with teacher educators. The word "cooperation," for example, seems to mean to most students--and most teachers--compliance with the teacher's desires, rather than working together in mutual give and take. Another revealing term is "good." One fall, 1992 class of undergraduates in their first semester of teacher education classes was especially characterized by young silenced "good girls":

> I was never a troublemaker. I always tried to please my teachers and was very flattered by the least little compliment.

Being "good" had been their success. Whenever the professor made eye-contact, they smiled, but said almost nothing in full-class discussions. They embodied--and most had never questioned--the definition of "good" generated by an earlier class (see Appendix B), and could not imagine themselves stepping over the very narrowly drawn lines that would cause them to be defined as "bad"--including being outspoken. Many times, "I'm sorry" appeared in response to the professor's marginal comments that suggested less than close reading of the text. It was difficult to get direct, sustained, engaged conversation. It seemed as if everyone was waiting for someone else to speak in full-class sessions, though the safer small groups pleasantly buzzed. This

was the class that had so much trouble understanding the radical ideas--essentially the origins of whole language and open classroom--in Sylvia Ashton-Warner's simple journal, Teacher.

Difficulty in collaborating: Trying to get the university students to practice interdependence in cooperative projects was perhaps the most difficult task of each semester. Since most members of university classes came from at least partial success in traditionally structured schooling, very few had had much if any experience of doing work that was not individual or competitive. Habits of rivalry for scarce "good grades" kept them from wanting to share ideas with each other, or to spend time helping someone else acquire concepts they already "had." Most have no frame of reference from their own schooling for seeking each other's assistance in study groups. Data suggest that competitive structures within a classroom, and tracking as early as first grade reading groups, let children know early who the teacher thinks is smart and who the teacher thinks is not, and hierarchies develop as early as that. Therefore, instead of seeing each other as resources, many university undergraduates still see each other as impediments to their own success, or they measure themselves against each other. Most of the young women students seem to blame themselves when they don't "measure up":

> I feel like I am stupid because all the people around me are doing well and I wonder what's wrong with me--why I can't do it.

Afraid of being criticized or laughed at from years of experiencing exactly that, with the full if unconscious

permission of the teacher, many pre-service teachers perpetuate the cycle of letting the ideas and directions of one assertive person dominate in a group, rather than risk disagreement, while the rest of the group smoulders in passive aggressive silence, and/or out-of-class back-stabbing.

The whole process of interdependence with peers seems to be new and threatening for most university students. Being "good" had made talking to each other, and especially "arguing," absolutely taboo in traditional classrooms. "I'm right, you're wrong" or, more usually, stony silence and capitulation, was the norm. "We have a problem here" seemed not to be a part of students' vocabulary. Unless teacher educators address this as an issue, how will new teachers operate as faculty members? Experience of not trusting peers to hear one's emerging or incomplete thoughts--anything but a sure right answer--stifles early attempts to have students explore, fumble, and create together. Terror of peer judgment make students at first reluctant to expose their writing to each other's scrutiny. A huge task is to learn to redirect their focus to listening for meaning rather than pouncing on and correcting small errors in each others' writing.

Early and even mid-term group task-orientation in some groups in undergraduate classes focus on "What are we supposed to do?" or "What does she want?" rather than on "What if we...?" Some individual members feel restrained by the others, fearful that what the others produce would not represent them in the same

best light that doing the task alone would. If they had worked in what might have been called cooperative groups, but seem not to have developed any of the social skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1975), before college, invariably they had felt resentment about being asked to teach someone not as smart as they, contemptuous of the others as hitchhikers. More than one reported preferring to be "in charge" of a group:

> All throughout K-12, I was always the group leader and I did all the work. This way I could be sure to achieve the grade I wanted--an A or B.
>
> Prof.: So who did the learning?
>
> St.: me.
>
> Prof.: Was that just fine with you?
>
> St: yes.
>
> Prof.: With them?
>
> St.: yes.
>
> Prof: With the teacher?
>
> St.: no.

The most successful cooperative groups seem to be those whose members have previously practiced successful cooperative learning. That has to start somewhere, however, and the data suggests that once students learn to see each other as rivals for teacher approval, genuine cooperative skills that are as much a part of human nature as competition no longer feel "natural" and take time and effort to re-learn. Even within one semester, however, much of the resistance to working interdependently in cooperative groups can dissipate.

Once the absence of rivalry for the teacher's approval is established, clear guidelines about replacing language of judgment with language of active listening (modeled by the weekly dialoguing on their individual papers) helps students practice the social skills of respectful attention. The first step seems to be removing "correcting." The second seems to be replacing praise with descriptive encouragement and "I-statements." Within a few class sessions, conversations within groups having their papers have been observed to be quite animated and genuine, and students who had hesitated to expose their writing have relaxed and deeply enjoyed the interchange.

Groups whose task is to problem-solve rather than just hear each other's perspectives on a text, especially those that must produce a lesson for the class, face more of the difficulties outlined above. Even most of those seem to come along, however, once the guidlelines for avoiding judging language and behaviors are established and practiced in other areas. The fragile and shifting conditions for success of cooperative learning groups seem to include: just enough but not too much time together in class; focus; determination; expectation of responsibility and of success based on sound theoretical grounding; frequent student reflective writing on how the group work is going; and a very measured bit of direct strategic teacher intervention. Given those conditions, most groups work through their problems and experience the thrill of creating something together, and that thrill is itself the best motivator for successful collaboration

on the next project. One student freewrote:

> Hmm. I think I kind of attempted to blame other members of my group for not accomplishing things right away. I'm learning that blame is pretty useless. Ultimately we were able to work as a group and I came to see that I had been trying to say it's not my fault that we're not getting anywhere as a group. I sat back and crossed my arms--shut down. In the future I'll try to engage myself and others in group performance.

In light of the literature on these strategies (Aronson, 1978; Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Sharan, 1976), the four of us as researchers have not been surprised to observe behaviors of liking each other develop in university classrooms which operate by cooperative learning, strongly reinforced by non-judgmental reader response papers and intensive dialogic feedback. Along with beginning to care about each other, some of the students also exhibit more caring attitudes toward people different from themselves, about whom they had previously held stereotypic views. The release from pressure of having to be quick with right answers seems definitely to contribute to this increased expression of concern and more independent, thoughtful, complex perspective.

So what about accountability and "standards"? Students of all ages demonstrate and report that once the intense pressure of someone standing over them to criticize is removed they will put time, energy, will, intelligence, and thoughtfulness into tasks. Perhaps the completed data will point to the work teachers and parents need to do: help students get past fear of grades and blame of the teacher, in order to focus on pleasure of engagement

in tasks. Interviews, student writing, and observations indicate that it is important not to reinforce those negative feelings by insisting on the importance of grades. Otherwise, fretting replaces thinking; making a piece of work look right or sound right so it will get a good grade replaces the desire to express, explore, communicate, keep a conversation going. Ultimately, if the pressure is too great, the student gives up.

On the other hand, our own direct experience of replacing grades with non-judgmental constructive feedback has demonstrated a positive and even astonishingly successful way to have students produce frequent, honest, passionate, thoughtful pieces of work, not merely as products which we require but as vehicles for their own exploration of self and the world. In fact, when a reader or listener focuses entirely on the content of the writing rather than on mechanics, even the mechanical quality of the writing has improved!

Teachers report believing that without grades, students will not work. Most students at first report believing that, as well. However, the data show that most students have worked more rigorously, more diligently, and, most important, more thoughtfully when they know that their papers will be read with great attention, and when they begin realize that coming to class without a paper to share makes them feel they have let their group down. This has not been the case for every student; but it is safe to say that just after mid-semester at the university, just about everyone has kept up with the bottom line expectation,

and just about everyone has produced quality work.

Too much is at stake when we subject students to the harsh glare of teacher judgment while they are still experimenting with their own identities and abilities. One undergraduate responded thus to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences:

> My brother was really talented in art. I believe if he kept it up he could have gone somewhere with it. As it turned out, his art teacher had constantly criticized his work. She rarely gave him a good grade on a drawing he worked hard on. It was an enjoyable thing for him to do and she turned it into something serious. He had to have every single little detail done according to her standards.
>
> I used to look through his art pad for that class because I loved to look at the pictures, and it was just full of criticism. I think that this woman just made him so frustrated, he just gave up on it. This really is sad.

Findings:

The data overwhelmingly reveal that when the teacher's dominant role is that of judge, the student feels obliged to become performer rather than learner, discoverer, constructor of his/her own meaning. The student's intellectual task becomes that of figuring out what the teacher wants rather than how the academic material makes sense in terms of his/her own prior or emerging knowledge. Weaning students from those concerns seems to be harder in direct proportion to the number of years of socialization in traditional "teacher-pleasing," and harder if the paradigm shifts only in one class.

At an interim period, in mid-spring of 1993, fewer of the high school students than in the late fall of 1992 were still

product-oriented; fewer remained uncomfortable with learning which was in progress. Fewer still seemed to be awaiting the judgment--and the decision-making--by the teacher. At the same interim period, the university student researchers continued to see some behaviors in their teaching of religious school that were apparent in the high school and university classes early in the academic year or semester. Although considerably less so by mid-March, in the once-a-week religious school, as well as in the other venues, some students still had trouble trusting that what they had to say about a text was interesting and important; many still safely wrote summaries and searched for right answers.

At all levels, some students seem to try, however inappropriately, to apply traditional ideas about grading and competition to freewrites, reader responses, writebacks, and cooperative learning. Some ingeniously quantify and translate the number of "yes's" on their papers into evidence that they are on the right track. With that in mind, the professor in particular began working on practicing restraint in her comments on student papers, trying to given descriptive encouragement rather than the kind of praise that feels like teacher approval.

None of this is easy to do. One semester or even one school year may be too brief a time for students to shift their thinking of many years, or for teachers to change the way we react to student work. Nevertheless, all of us see progress that feels enormous, if gradual.

Implications for teacher educators

Given the deeply internalized pressures that most university students bring with them from traditional schooling into teacher education classes, it seems to the researchers that teacher educators in particular have an obligation to reconsider the processes by which we conduct our classes. While deploring student silence, memorization, acceptance of surface right answers, poverty of imagination and careful avoidance of divergent thinking--all aspects of dependency--teachers might usefully wonder if their own perhaps unconscious reinforcement of students' teacher-pleasing behaviors reproduce those very behaviors that they wish to eradicate. Who will be able to use with full understanding such progressive methods as "authentic assessment," for example, if they have never been authentically assessed through authentic learning experiences leading to self-evaluation?

Teacher education classes can be the place to ask students to unlearn habits of fiercely protective individualism and competitiveness against each other, orientation to reward and punishment, misdirected focus on getting through rather than on deep thinking about theoretical content and its practical application, and total dependency on teacher direction. They can be the places where people about to be teachers can construct their own ways of seeing and thinking from wider perspectives as they practice, recognize and internalize caring, creative, de-centered and responsible behaviors: that is, the behaviors that

should characterize teachers.

If teacher education classes are not such places, it is hard to imagine another situation in their lives in which teachers will have the support they need to confront and locate the sources of their own complicated assumptions and feelings about schooling (Jersild, 1955). Therefore it may be useless to hope that substantive changes will occur in elementary and secondary education until teachers examine the limitations of their own early schooling within the supportive structure of living as well as considering the freedom and responsibility of authentic ways of learning.

# APPENDIX A

## DOCUMENTS GIVEN TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

### Guidelines to Students, from Education Course Outline, 1992

### READER RESPONSE PAPERS

You are asked to respond to each of the assigned readings with a "reader response paper," 2-3 pages typed double spaced:

NOT 1) a summary or "book report" of the reading. I will have re-read all of the assignments, so you don't need to refresh my memory; and I expect and trust that you will have done the assignment, so you don't need to prove to me that you have. Those are the only functions of a summary, ever. Not here.

NOT 2) a judgment of the reading. NO Agree-Disagree statements, because, having not had the experiences that the authors have had, you cannot judge whether they're describing those experiences accurately. All you can say is whether what they describe speaks to experiences you have had or not, and how you relate to what they describe, and whether their conclusions make sense to you, given the evidence they provide, and what questions and feelings they raise for you. If the writer's viewpoint makes you uncomfortable, SAY THAT, AND SAY EXACTLY WHY! You're not in debate with the writer, not out to win or defend your position; you are in process of figuring out why YOU think what you think. Being in collision over ways of seeing is a good way to examine that. Be open--not to swallowing whole whatever you read, but to rethinking assumptions.

1) jot down notes in the margins or on paper as you read. Underline. Your job is to engage with the book or the article or story. Allow yourself to have a conversation, a mutually respectful dialogue, with the writer, to whom you're listening carefully. Capture that dialogue on paper. YOUR thinking is what we're after here, with lots of specifics. Take advantage of two ways to focus: on your own experiences through the prism of the writer's perceptions, and on the writer's perceptions through the prism of your own experiences. I want the double vision, so you come out of the writing changed.

2) Then do a freewrite that shapes and develops the notes you've taken. Let yourself discover, as you write, where the new ideas have taken you. You may want to revise, based on what you find, or not, but <u>do</u> proofread at the very end, and fix!

To do these writings, it is necessary that you feel free to use the word "I." At the beginning of the semester, you may have to struggle to give yourself permission to do that. I do not

want you to distance yourself from these readings. You don't need to worry about "saying something intelligent" in these papers; you do need to let yourself be passionate, reflective, and thoughtful, careful of the text (which means that skimming is not enough), so that what comes through in the paper is your personal experience of reading the text.

There are no right answers. We need everyone's responses.

End of Course Outline

Grading: The issue of grading for this course will be discussed in terms of the politics and psychology of grading and alternative assessment in schools. There will be no grades on individual papers. A mid-term and final grade will be generated collaboratively, as the result of a personal letter of self-evaluation, followed by an optional individual conference.

Criteria for grading will be based on growth over time, as established within a portfolio of writings which your work of the semester will produce. The process at the end will be to locate all the previously unexamined assumptions you have now had reason to call into question. For each, you will describe the extent to which you then either affirm, still question, or fully challenge that assumption, what you now think if you think differently, and the specific direct experiences (in here or in schools), readings, writings, conversations, etc. through which you did the examining of that particular assumption.

The letter that you write out of this investigation must choose whithin a range you are comfortable with for the grade you believe you have earned in this course.

Bottom line for passing is that you spent a lot of time and energy: you turned in all the work, and, unless there was an emergency about which you spoke to me, you showed up for all classes and at the schools.

Grade yourself for the depth of reflectiveness and risk-taking in your classroom observations and reader responses: for your clear understanding of each of the readings and experiences in their own terms, as well as in terms of your own directly lived experience.

Grade yourself also for your participation in all group work, most particularly in the presentation projects, both for the extent to which your projects designed a lesson which honored all of the seven different intelligences, and the extent to which you personally were a fully cooperating member of those groups. For both aspects, talk about what you learned about yourself, and

about teaching and learning, from the work of creating and trying out those lessons, and from the general work of listening to others as well as sharing ideas with others. What changes have you had to go through? Where are you now?

Conferences: In addition to the optional final conference, each student must initiate and attend one half-hour conference during the semester.

Expectations:

Approximately 14 reader response papers
One mid-semester and one final letter of self-evaluation
Reports from at least 6 school observations, some of which should involve direct interaction with elementary students
Projects as assigned
Full participation in group work

Guidelines given within four weeks of the end of semester:

CHOOSING A GRADE

I. There are two ways to approach the decision-making in the paper of self-evaluation:

1) "What can I say to convince her to give me an A?"

2) "What do I honestly find myself having learned, and what is that worth in terms of the criteria the class set, and in terms of my own needs as a teacher and as a person?"

II. There are some ways of thinking about the continuum of consciousness, from merely passing, on one end, to an A on the other:

1) Depth below surface of investigation into content:

what everyone already "knows"
what I already know, rearranged
new facts and figures
what others say about facts and figures
struggle to understand, connect, find meaning
significant construction of new knowledge

2) Depth below surface of how you used project time:

"no assignment this week"
deep investigation

3) Energy you expended to track down, use, and integrate alternative sources

satisfied with something that works
digging

4) Depth of risk-taking in presentation process:

telling
showing, making
engaging the class
trusting the engagement

5) Group work is on a continuum from the extremes of too passive, generally going along for the ride, on the one side, to overbearing, dominating, having to get your way on the other side. Neither is an A, of course, or even a B. Excellent group work is between those two, where you fully cooperated by doing at least your share, as defined within group. It's listening, suggesting, inventing, encouraging, disagreeing constructively, letting others' input stimulate your own inventiveness and construction of knowledge, appreciating theirs, helping bring coherence to the product so everyone feels connected.

6) Depth below surface of observations:

sitting there
noticing environment, content, teacher
closely watching interactions
describing complexities, asking why
applying course knowledge to what you're seeing
imagining and planning how you might operate differently in such circumstances

7) Depth below surface of reading and writing:

Surface: going through the motions
Depth: going through changes

8) Depth below surface of reflective dialoguing in write-backs:

yes-no answers
defending a position
clarifying and extending
using your own paper and my feedback to construct new insights

9) Depth of involvement in others' presentations:

coming to class

taking in what's said, looking at materials,
going through activities
figuring out how new ideas fit in with what
you already know
making connections, extending possibilities

opening to new ways of thinking
figuring out how to use new understandings

10) Depth of focus:

on success in course
on accumulating knowledge
on understanding
on creating new meaning

This is not a checklist, but it might be a guide if you're stuck for what it all adds up to once you have developed your own ways of thinking about your progress through the course.

# APPENDIX B

## UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' DEFINITIONS OF "GOOD" AND "BAD"

### "GOOD"

well mannered, polite, well-behaved
listens
obeys the teacher
participates in class
neat writing
brown noses
does all their work, with no prodding
does things for the teacher
does things to impress the teacher
does what the teacher says
pays attention
does work on time
listens to rules
works well with others
"goody"--meeting the expectations of the teacher whether you thought it was wrong or not
doing the best a student is capable of doing w/o disrupting others
learns the material
respects others
applies him/herself
cooperates
behave themselves
conscientious
only talks when called upon
clean
gets good grades
teacher's pet
popular in class
does what the teacher says, not what other children tell them to do
friendly, courteous
does work on time and thoroughly
follows all the rules
tries to understand the lesson
doesn't talk back
doesn't cause any trouble
raises hand
doesn't talk when someone else is talking
keeps hands to self
keeps mouth shut and listens to what teacher is telling him/her
knows when to be silent but also feels free to offer opinions and ask questions
neat
meets expectations

"BAD"

trouble-maker
talker
makes noise in class
doesn't follow the rules
purposely breaks the rules often
never does their work
doesn't do homework
yells
talks out of turn
doesn't raise hand
picks on/hits other kids
fights a lot
is wise to the teacher
talks to others when told not to
makes noise
disrupts other students
doesn't listen to the teacher
doesn't care
class clown
not meeting the expectation of the teacher whether you thought it was right or not
does not obey the teacher
breaks the rules
not doing what's asked of them
causes problems
won't sit still
won't stop talking
won't learn
is mean to others
persistent discipline problems
not good students academically
don't get good grades
kids that create problems may need to be handled differently by the teacher
is not prepared for class
needs constant discipline
is not productive
is detrimental to his and the class's learning
outspoken

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